



Students as colleagues: New frameworks for co-creating an engaged campus

Nicholas Longo, Associate Professor, Providence College [nlongo@providence.edu]

Ed Zlotkowski, Professor, Bentley College [ezlotkowski@bentley.edu]

Alma Blount, Director of the Hart Leadership Program, Director of Service Opportunities in Leadership, Duke University [blt@duke.edu]

Deborah Keisch Polin, UACT Director, University of Massachusetts-Amherst
[dkeisch@anthro.umass.edu]

Tamica Ramos, Campus Director, Institute for Civic Engagement, Miami Dade College
[tramos@mdc.edu]

Magali Garcia Pletch, undergraduate student, Providence College [mgarciap@friars.providence.edu]

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Summary

Significant progress has been made in higher education to activate civic engagement. The scholarship of engagement has moved from the margins to the mainstream. This has had a tremendous impact on notions of connected ways of knowing—with a growing recognition of the wisdom of community knowledge. Yet, there is an increasing sense that the civic engagement movement is at a crossroads and

in need of new vision and energy for democratic progress to be further realized (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011).

If the movement has indeed leveled off, we believe it is partly because of the narrow focus on faculty development as a method of building engaged scholarship. We contend that academia must reframe its relationship with students in community-based work. This involves changing the way civic engagement is conceptualized, taught, and practiced. In short, democratic-minded practitioners must focus on putting students at the center.

Ironically, the recent surge in the civic engagement movement began with students in a central role. In writing about the founding of the Campus Outreach Opportunities League (COOL) in 1984 and other student-led efforts during that time, Liu notes that “*students catalyzed the contemporary service movement in higher education*” (2006, p. 6). Liu argues that in the late 1980s faculty and administrators began claiming leadership of the movement in the interest of sustainability. This focus on institutionalization has deepened since his writing.

In this conference symposium, we feature student-faculty pairs from a diverse set of campuses. The panelists argue the importance of viewing students as colleagues and point to examples of how this is currently being done and supported by research. We conclude with a conversation in the spirit of what we are proposing—a genuine dialogue with students.

References:

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